

FLAMES SWEEP EMERYVILLE PLANT; BLASTS HURL CASKS

TRIBUNE JAN 2 - 1942

Exploding barrels and drums this afternoon endangered the lives of several hundred persons as fire swept the plant of McGuire & Company, barrel manufacturers, located at the foot of Shellmound Street in Emeryville.

Witnesses said some of the drum heads were blown a block and a half from the scene of the blaze. Twenty workmen in the plant escaped from the building without injury.

Loss to the buildings and contents may run as high as \$100,000, according to W. J. McGuire, head of the company. The building also housed the Seeburg Drum Company.

The fire is believed to have started in the drum-cleaning department at the front of the building when a spark ignited some fumes. An explosion shook the building just before the blaze started.

Emeryville firemen had to string their first hose about 1500 feet before they could battle the blaze. The intense heat hampered the work of the firefighters.

Two companies of the Oakland Fire Department were called out to aid the Emeryville company in fighting the blaze and protecting adjoining buildings.

The McGuire property is located next to the Sherwin-Williams Paint Company plant and the Judson Steel Company.

There were more than 3000 empty barrels in the building, a corrugated iron structure. The barrels are valued at \$2 or more each. Many of them contained small amounts of oil and other residues, according to reports.

F.B.I. Probes 2 Defense Fires

TRIB D JAN 3 - 1942

Emeryville Factory Has \$100,000 Loss; \$300,000 Cannery Fire

Sabotage possibilities are being investigated today by the F.B.I. and police officers combing the ashes of industrial fires here and in Mountain View which yesterday resulted in a loss of \$400,000.

The McGuire and Company barrel plant in Emeryville reported a \$100,000 loss after a spectacular blaze, punctuated by innumerable oil drum explosions.

A heavy section of corrugated iron wall collapsed during the fire narrowly missing members of the fire department. Several fire fighters suffered minor injuries.

W. J. McGuire, owner of the plant at the foot of Shellmont Street, estimated that 3000 oil drums, valued at \$2 each were destroyed. The plant itself was a total loss.

OTHER PLANTS PERILED

Emeryville firemen prevented the blaze from spreading to the neighboring Judson Steel Corporation and Sherwin-Williams Paint Company plants.

The flames started in the paint thinning section of the building and spread rapidly as paints, oil and solvents exploded. Facilities of the Seeberg Drum Company, manufacturers of plywood containers, tenants in the building, were destroyed.

The McGuire Company was working on National defense orders in addition to its routine business. Only 20 minutes after 20 employees had fled from the structure, it was rocked by a violent explosion.

CANNERY SWEEP

In Mountain View, one complete unit of the Richmond Chase Cannery, working on Government food orders, was swept by fire which destroyed large stocks of canned goods.

F.B.I. agents entered the investigation because of the Government contracts.

E. N. Richmond, company president, said that cause of the blaze and full loss could not be determined immediately. Some of the canned foods might be salvaged, he said, but this could not be done until debris had cooled sufficiently to permit handling and sorting of stacks of canned goods.

When firemen arrived at the cannery, they found that the building already was doomed. They were able to prevent spread of the flames to the company's other three Mountain View units.

FIVE PERSONS INJURED IN \$100,000 EMERYVILLE FIRE

Oliver Tire and Rubber Co. Plant Is Swept by Flames for Three Hours

TRIB D OCT 8 - 1945

A spectacular fire, started when a 30-gallon drum of gasoline exploded, caused damage estimated at \$100,000 early today to the Oliver Tire and Rubber Company at 4343 San Pablo Avenue, Emeryville.

Four employees and one Emeryville fireman were injured by fire and smoke in the fight that continued from 2:44 a.m. until 5:30 a.m. to bring the roaring blaze under control.

The nearby Oakland Ball Park and the Ralph Campbell wholesale cleaning and dyeing establishment at 4476 Emery Street were threatened by the fire and the fighters poured streams of water onto the latter building to avert a second blaze there.

FLAMES HIGH IN AIR

Rubber, gasoline, solvents, lamp black and other ingredients used in rubber manufacture fed the leaping flames which shot high into the air and were easily visible from a distance of 10 miles.

The fire was too big for the Emeryville fire department to handle, and Fire Chief E. T. Chleason called on Oakland for help.

Battalion Fire Chief Patrick Gaynor of Oakland sent out two engines on the first call. When he arrived and saw the threatened damage to the ball park he immediately summoned another engine and truck.

INJURED GIVEN AID

The injured men were taken to Highland Hospital here for treatment and were released immediately to go home. They were:

Frank F. Mesnickow, 49, of 5872 Doyle Street, Emeryville, member of the Emeryville Fire Department, cut on left hand.

Howard Anderson, 40, of 1036 59th Street, Oakland, employee, overcome by smoke and burns on right hand.

James Burton, 42, of 1120 East Fourteenth Street, Oakland, overcome by smoke, burns on lower arms and hands.

Leland Johnson, 40, of 488 10th Street, Oakland, overcome by smoke.

Calvin Baker, 32, of 1068 55th Street, Oakland, burns on hands and upper arms.

ALL FIREMEN CALLED

All off-duty firemen in Emeryville were called when the blaze broke out with the explosion of a gasoline drum in the front of one of three buildings of the rubber plant, which manufactures rubber for recapping and retreading tires and ships its product all over the world.

The firehouse is located adjacent to the plant, but before firemen could get into action, the fast-spreading fire was out of control. Employees working on the night shift also attempted to check the blaze at its start, but without success.

cess.

In addition to sending firefighters and apparatus, Oakland rushed 12 police officers to the scene to aid in directing traffic and Berkeley also sent a police detail.

The Oakland equipment was removed when the blaze was brought under control at 5:30 a.m., but Emeryville's men remained for the "mopping up" of the costly fire, still burning hours after it started.

LOSS MAY GO HIGHER

Gaynor gave an original damages estimate of between \$85,000 and \$100,000 and said the loss might go even higher when a final check is made.

Besides the loss of manufacturing products and the damage to the building, the firm, owned by G. E. Oliver, suffered extensive damage to machinery.

\$500,000

Fire Destroys Plant Here

TRIB D MAR 16 1946

Block-Long Electric Works in Emeryville Leveled for 3rd Time

Losses passed the half million mark today in a spectacular fire which destroyed the Gardner Electric Manufacturing Company plant at 4227 Hollis Street, Emeryville, during the night and damaged adjoining buildings.

At daybreak, the fire still smoldered among the buckled walls, brick piles and twisted steel that marked the block-long, two-story structure. Damages to the plant alone were estimated by Emeryville Fire Chief Edward Schleason at \$500,000.

The Morehouse Mustard and Supply Company plant at 4221 Hollis Street, on the south side of the Gardner plant, also caught fire during the height of the blaze and early estimates set damages there at \$3000.

P. G. & E. LOSSES

On the north side, the P.G. & E. building which houses the Bureau of Tests withstood the flames, but a half dozen experimental transformers, rigged up outside the structure, were destroyed. Checks were being made to determine their value.

The fire, which lighted the entire Eastbay area and was visible from many parts of San Francisco, broke out at about 11:30 p.m. in the lacquer room of the plant, according to Chief Schleason, apparently from an overheated electric bake oven.

When Emeryville firemen arrived, the fire already was shooting from the rear of the building and while they connected the first hose, the lacquer pots burst, spreading flames the entire length of the building in a sudden flare up.

QUICK OAKLAND AID

Schleason immediately called for help from the Oakland Fire Department, which sent four trucks. He credited their quick arrival with saving surrounding buildings from more extensive damage.

By the time the Oakland equipment arrived, flames had burst out through the roof and shot 300 feet on more in the air.

Heat from the flames caused fuses on top of a high-voltage transformer on a power pole to blow out with a bright flash, cutting off power in industrial plants over an area of five blocks.

A P. G. & E. crew was called out to repair the damage and to cut off gas to the ovens in the Gardner plant. They were unable to reach the cut-off valve, however, until two hours later, when the flames subsided.

ADJOINING DAMAGE

ADJOINING DAMAGE

Fire which had spread to the adjoining Morehouse plant were extinguished quickly and main loss there was to water-damaged paper cartons, according to Chief Schlea-son.

Equipment was kept on a stand-by basis today to keep the still burning debris from causing other damage. One of the brick walls of the building collapsed in the early morning hours and the other three were threatening to fall, the fire chief said.

The plant, which manufactures transformers and coils, was destroyed by fire twice previously, burning to the ground on the same location in 1925 and 1937, Assistant Police Chief John Doyle reported.

Tank Explodes as Fire Sweeps Emeryville Plant; \$50,000 Loss

TRIB D SEP 26 1948

EMERYVILLE, Sept. 25.—A 10,000-gallon tank of cleaning solvent exploded today as a fire swept the McGuire & Co. barrel plant at 4500 Shellmound Street, causing damage estimated in excess of \$50,000.

The explosion was heard for blocks around, and huge clouds of smoke could be seen throughout the Bay area.

William McGuire, owner and president of the company, was the only person on the property at the time. He said he saw, from his office, the fire at the rear of the warehouse.

He turned in an alarm, but too late to prevent the flames from reaching the tank with solvent. The tank blew up, showering the cleaning solvent into the open end of the warehouse and over the yard.

Half of the 3000-foot warehouse was burned and parts of the roof collapsed before firemen were able to control the flames.

Emeryville firemen called for help from Oakland, which sent five engine companies to assist.

In the yard, several other storage tanks were also in danger of exploding as the solvent-fed fire raged among stored barrels.

The fire was prevented from reaching wooden barrels also stored in the yard.

An ambulance stood by during the fire fighting effort, but was not needed.

\$550,000

Emeryville

Plant Blaze

Flames Sweep Two
Buildings; Council
Meeting Interrupted

EMERYVILLE, Feb. 16. — A raging, \$550,000 fire last night destroyed a large refrigeration repair and assembly plant, damaged a big machine shop and broke up the meeting of the Emeryville City Council.

Because of government equipment in the machine works, the FBI immediately joined Emeryville Fire Marshal George Gallagher and Fire Chief Henry Schuller in an investigation of cause of the fire.

Despite the efforts of 65 Emeryville and Oakland firemen, the block-square plant of the Tecumseh Products Company at 1301 Park Ave., was leveled by the flames, visible throughout the Bay Area as they touched off spectacular explo-

Picture on Page 19

sions of inflammable freezing liquids.

The adjoining Albert Wright Screw Machine Company at 4062 Hollis St., suffered \$50,000 damage, mostly from water. More serious damage was averted by the quick action of a 50-man night crew, which loaded highly inflammable drums of oil on fork-lift trucks and rushed them from the building.

In the machine works was housed ordnance equipment for manufacture of shells.

Gallagher said discovering cause of the blaze would be difficult, but added the possibility of arson had been virtually ruled out.

City councilmen broke up their "hottest" session in history as heat from the flaming Tecumseh Products plant, which adjoins the City Hall, cracked windows in the council chambers.

BACK FROM FIRE

dows in the council chambers.

BACK FROM FIRE

The councilmen returned from the fire just long enough to approve the mid-month city payroll before voting a hasty adjournment.

The first alarm was turned in at 8:44 p.m. from an alarm box a half-block away.

"By the time the first equipment arrived, flames were eating through the roof and were off and running," Chief Schuller said.

All of Emeryville's six pieces of equipment responded to the first alarm, and off-duty firemen were called into service within minutes after he arrived, Chief Schuller asked Oakland for aid, and six trucks and 35 firemen sped to the scene.

REDUCED TO RUBBLE

Less than an hour after the first alarm, the Tecumseh products plant had been reduced to smoldering rubble.

Spectacular torches towered 200 feet into the air as the flames touched off inflammable liquids inside the plant, attracting a

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crowd of 1,000 persons and resulting in telephone calls to police switchboards in cities throughout the Bay Area.

As the fire collapsed the walls and roof of the brick building, flames spread to the nearby machine shop. Night crewmen rushed the drums of oil outside, then broke out their own fire fighting equipment to "wet down" machinery inside the building.

At the same time, city employees removed equipment from a storage shed at the rear of the City Hall when flames threatened that building.

Chief Schuller and Stuart Costigan, plant manager for Tecumseh Products, whose main offices are in the East, estimated damage to the refrigeration firm at \$500,000.

Costigan said the building was valued at approximately \$225,000, and that there was a \$125,000 stock room inventory, \$25,000 in completed units and another \$5,250 worth of units on the assembly line. He could not estimate the value of the equipment destroyed.

Costigan, who was in the plant at 6:30 p.m., said the flames apparently broke out near the front of the building.

Huge Fire at

MAR 21 1966

The worst fire in Emeryville's history last night engulfed an entire city block, destroyed three big warehouses and caused up to \$1.5 million in damage as it threatened several other buildings.

Three firemen were injured in the battle to prevent the wind-driven flames from spreading through the valuable industrial district.

The general alarm blaze, visible throughout the Bay Area,

Fire Photos

The photos of the Emeryville fire which appear in today's Tribune were taken by staff photographers Lonnie Wilson, Keith Denison, Chris Kjobech and Tom Williams.

sent pillars of smoke and fire 150 feet into the air.

The entire Emeryville Fire De-

partment — 39 men — aided by more than 50 firemen from Oakland, Berkeley and the Alameda County Civil Defense Department fought desperately for nearly four hours to control the flames.

Many of them were still at the scene 12 hours later, hosing down the smoldering ruins to prevent a new breakout.

Fire Chief Peter Vittori predicted it would be at least an-

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other 12 hours before the fire was completely out.

Only favorable winds prevented chunks of flaming debris from igniting the huge Sherwin-Williams Paint Co. plant directly across the street.

The destroyed buildings were the Container Corporation of America paper box plant at 4549 Horton St., the Marcel Schurman Co. stationery warehouse at 4215 Horton St., the Sears Roebuck electrical shop at Park Avenue and Hubbard St. and an adjacent Sears warehouse.

The blaze reduced to rubble the entire block of brick buildings bounded by Sherwin Street, Hubbard Street, Horton Street and Park Avenue.

Barrels of glue in the paper box plant exploded like artillery shells. Firestorm-like winds caused by the intense heat whirled pieces of burning material into the night sky like flaming bats.

Dozens of small roof-top fires,

some more than a block away, were extinguished by patrolling firemen and property owners stationed on the roofs.

Huge rectangles of flaming cardboard spun from the burning warehouses, raining fire on firemen and spectators.

Dense smoke and flying embers were carried by the wind across the nearby Eastshore Freeway, forcing the Highway Patrol to close the Powell Street-Emeryville on and off ramps.

Power pole and high-tension lines near the fire ignited and burned, cutting electricity in the fire area and causing PG&E to shut down other power distribution lines.

The worst injury was suffered by Oakland fireman Boyson Thompson, 52, of 3823 Elston Ave., who was knocked unconscious by the heavy nozzle on a writhing fire hose.

Another Oakland fireman, Richard Gower, 22, of 2133 44th St., was treated at Merritt Hospital for facial burns. Berkeley fireman Thomas Botz, 33, was treated at Herrick Memorial Hospital for smoke inhalation.

The brick walls of the burning buildings crumbled and fell outward. One wall narrowly missed a fire truck as firemen dropped their equipment and scrambled for safety.

Roof-top fires at two downwind buildings, the Bay Cities Warehouse and the Morris P. Kirk and Son smelter supply company, were quickly put out.

The first warning of the fire came from an automatic fire alarm in one of the warehouses at 7 p.m. As firemen arrived moments later the flames were already bursting through the roof.

Within minutes the Emeryville department called a general alarm and invoked its mutual assistance agreements with adjacent cities.

The Oakland fire department responded with 35 men and seven pieces of equipment, including its big snorkel pumper designed to hurl water from great heights.

Berkeley sent an engine company and a truck company. The firemen were joined by dozens of civil defense workers and

civilian volunteers, including Emeryville's City Councilmen and Mayor Donald Neary.

Neary, hatless, his hair streaming in his face, ran from one point to another around the burning block wearing a borrowed yellow waterproof jacket.

He said he doubted the loss would be less than \$1.5 million.

"It's the biggest fire in the history of Emeryville," said Councilman Pietro Guaragno.

Assistant Fire Chief B. F. Boyd pegged the damage estimate at about \$250,000. He said he had information that the Sears building contained \$50,000 worth of goods.

Most of the dollar damage in the box warehouse came from the loss of delivery trucks.

Vittori declined to give any estimate at all.

Spectators crowded behind police lines to watch the battle. Several took up vantage points on the tall stairway leading up to the Town Hall on Park Avenue two blocks away.

Emeryville police, with the help of officers from Oakland and the California Highway Patrol, closed the entire section of the city to traffic.

The lack of power cut out most of the city's burglar alarms, and police patrolled the streets to prevent looting.

The towering flames were clearly visible from Twin Peaks in San Francisco, Marin County and from homes in the Eastbay hills.

\$1 Million

Blaze in

AUG 13 1971

Emeryville

By WILL JONES

Tribune Staff Writer

EMERYVILLE — A spectacular general alarm fire last night destroyed the Western Die Casting Co. plant here and caused considerable damage to an adjoining business.

Five employees working in the foundry at 4065 Hollis St., across the street from the Emeryville City Hall, fled to safety from the burning building.

Fiercely blazing magnesium, a metallic chemical element used in the plant's operation, fed the raging fire that burned like a roman candle.

Silvery flame reflections bouncing off the low fog cover made the spectacle visible throughout the Bay Area.

The 56,000 square foot, two-story wooden and concrete framed building was leveled by the blaze.

The fire spread to the Winslow Filter Corp. at 4069 Hollis St. but firemen prevented it from reaching other nearby buildings, including the Santa Fe Railroad Co.'s transportation office and the Golden West Paint Manufacturing Co.

Emeryville Fire Chief Peter Vittori said the Winslow Corp. suffered "moderate" fire and water damage.

Emeryville fireman Robert Brant, 27, a hoseman, was overcome by smoke, taken to Merritt Hospital, treated and released.

Larry Dursault, 28, of Vallejo, night foreman at the found-

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W. J. Gilbert, noted Persia host for the Auction Sunda

ion Fire at Emeryville Foundry

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ry, said the blaze started about 8:10 p.m. in the No. 4 die casting machine.

"I was standing near the machine when I heard an explosion and then saw fire," Dursault said.

He said he grabbed a fire extinguisher but flames were spreading too fast.

"I went to the telephone to call the fire department but the telephone lines were dead," having been burned by the fire, he added.

Another employe ran to the nearby Shanty Restaurant and called the fire department.

Emeryville City Councilman Donald H. Heintz, who was driving in the area, spotted the blaze and notified the police department, which is housed in the City Hall.

Manuel Cravalho, of 278 Winton Ave., Hayward, another employe, said he was standing behind the die casting machine when the explosion occurred.

"Some guys tried to fight it (the fire) but it went too fast," he said. "There was nothing but flames all over in a matter of seconds. I said, 'Let's get the hell out of here.'"

Cravalho said he believed the fire was started by a pot of molten brass heated to 2,400 degrees, igniting spilled oil.

He said he heard a "sharp hissing sound" an instant before the blast and theorized that an oil line to the machine broke, causing the oil to spill onto the molten brass.

Vittori said he was unable to give an immediate damage estimate but another city official said it probably would be around \$1 million.

G. O. Simpson, vice president of the foundry which employs 75 persons, was visibly shaken by the loss and said he had "no comment" on the fire or amount of damage.

"I am just thankful that all the employes got out safely," Simpson said.

The entire 45-man Emeryville Fire Department, including 26 off-duty firemen, battled the blaze for over two hours before bringing it under control.

had the peaches unloaded.

In another incident, an unidentified AC Transit bus driver fell from the roof of his home at 1312 Park Ave. while chasing some spectators from his roof.

The man, who was armed with a .22 caliber rifle when he was on the building, told police he was not injured but was taken to Kaiser Hospital for observation.

They were assisted by 50

control.

They were assisted by 50 firemen and nine pieces of equipment, including the snorkel truck, from Oakland. The Alameda County Civil Defense Unit was on standby duty at the scene.

A pall of black smoke hovered over the area for several hours after the fire was brought under control.

The blaze drew hundreds of spectators onto the streets and sidewalks and numerous incidents of vandalism were reported, police said.

Several cars were broken into, including the private cars of Emeryville City Clerk Alyce M. Winger and some policemen who were on duty.

Police also reported that goods were stolen from vans parked along the Santa Fe Railroad tracks on Yerba Buena Ave.

James Fox, 14, the son of Emeryville City Councilman Wallace Fox, received a facial cut when he was hit by a peach thrown by some juveniles.

The peaches were taken from a Del Monte Corporation's truck, which was parked on the street. Police called Del Monte officials and